



## UK-based organisations deeply concerned by UK Government decision not to support UN Gaza inquiry

1 June 2018

As a group of UK-based humanitarian, development, human rights and faith organisations working to support the rights of the Palestinian people, we are deeply concerned by the UK Government's decision not to support the establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry to assess violations of international law in the context of large-scale civilian protests in Gaza.

Since 30 March, Palestinians in Gaza have been participating in the "Great March of Return", protesting against the ongoing denial of the right of return, as recognised in international law, for Palestinian refugees, as well as the intolerable living conditions under Israel's 11-year [illegal closure](#), compounded by Egypt's restrictions on movement in and out of Gaza.

Israeli forces have meted out shocking violence against these demonstrators. At least [112 Palestinians](#), including 14 children, have been killed in the protests. The total number of injuries since 30 March, [13,375](#), now exceeds the [approximately 11,000](#) injured in the 2014 offensive.

Despite repeated UK Government statements of support for an independent investigation into recent events in Gaza, the UK abstained on the UN vote for the Commission of Inquiry, [explaining in a statement](#) that it believes that the resolution was "*partial and unhelpfully unbalanced*", and called on Israel to carry out its own "*independent and transparent investigation*".

The UK's position is misjudged. The Council's resolution explicitly provides the Commission of Inquiry with a comprehensive mandate to "*investigate all alleged violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and international human rights law*" and calls on Israel and "*all relevant parties*" to cooperate with it.

The UK's statement also ignores the recent warning of [UN human rights experts](#) that Israel's "*planned probe may lack the independence, impartiality and effectiveness required by the international law*". Similar concerns about Israeli impunity have been raised by [Israeli human rights organisations](#), the [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), and the [last UN Commission of Inquiry to focus on Gaza](#), after the 2014 conflict.

It must also be remembered that Gaza's mass casualties have entered a health system which the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\) warned](#) was "*on the brink of collapse*" before this latest crisis began, due to chronic shortages of medicines, equipment, electricity and fuel to keep hospital backup generators running.

There can be no humanitarian solutions to man-made problems. Palestinians in Gaza are demanding their rights and dignity, which cannot be achieved under permanent closure, occupation and displacement.

We call on the UK Government to reconsider its position on the UN-mandated Commission of Inquiry. In addition, the UK Government must call on Israel to fully adhere to its international legal obligations as the occupying power in Gaza, and work intensively with its international partners to bring the closure and the occupation permanently to an end so as to finally realise the rights of the Palestinian people to live in freedom and dignity.

**Signatories:**

- ABCD Bethlehem
- Catholic Agency For Overseas Development (CAFOD)
- Christian Aid
- Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel- UK and Ireland (EAPPI UK and Ireland)
- Embrace the Middle East
- Friends of Nablus and Surrounding Areas (FONSA)
- Friends of Birzeit University (FOBZU)
- Interpal
- Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR)
- Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP)
- Quakers in Britain
- The Council for Arab-British Understanding (Caabu)
- War on Want